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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR ZEYA

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON SHI'A MOSQUE INCIDENT: LOCALIZED ACT
"BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION" BY LOCAL MEDIA

REF: KUWAIT 4451

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) This is an update to reftel reporting on the October 7 attack against a Shi'a mosque in Jahra, a predominantly Sunni city approximately 35 kilometers west of Kuwait City. According to the mosque's owner, Hussein Al-Qattan, and a worshiper at the mosque "between 150 to 200 Saudi and bidoon (stateless Arab) juveniles" were involved in the incident. (Note: This is more than double the number reported previously by our Shi'a contacts. End note.) Al-Qattan said this was the fourth and largest attack against the mosque to date. He described previous incidents as "child riots." Al-Qattan blamed "Salafi Takfiris" (Takfir: A Muslim who labels other Muslims "kafir," unbelievers or infidels) from two neighboring Sunni mosques for instigating the attack. Expressing overall satisfaction with the Government response to the incident, Al-Qattan ruled out the possibility of another, similar attack against the mosque, noting that Interior Minister Shaykh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was "extremely serious in addressing the situation." Suggesting that the incident "may have been blown out of proportion by some press reports," Al-Qattan said the attack had not negatively affected Shi'a-Sunni relations in Jahra. "The area is safe for all," he concluded.

¶2. (C) In an October 26 visit to the mosque, Poloffs observed a substantial amount of broken glass and bottles littering the ground around the mosque. In addition, there were two large burn marks on the sandy parking lot. The mosque, a modestly-sized, seemingly rickety tin and metal structure surrounded by cement barriers, high fences, and barbed wire, is situated on the corner of a main street at the edge of an open dirt field. One worshiper told Poloffs bidoon, who he characterized as "Wahabi and Takfiri," were responsible for the attack. He also noted that this is the only Shi'a mosque in Jahra, the largest city in the governorate of Al-Jahra, which has a population of 99,073.

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